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AUTHOR	De Leonibus, Nancy
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ABSTRACT

Improving student motivation and self-concept is now an important concern of principals. Positive results arise from such diverse theories as Skinner's positive reinforcement techniques or Maslow's self-actualization model. Although evidence on cause and effect of motivation is scarce, it does seem likely that motivation is related to student self-esteem, level of aspiration, and need for achievement. Evidence indicates that motivation training can have a positive effect on students' school behavior. Increased student motivation also appears to be linked to high teacher expectations and appropriate use of feedback and praise. A clearly emergent trend is an attempt to adapt classroom structure to individual pupil motivational style. One student motivation profile measures the components of positive orientation toward learning, need for social recognition, failure anxiety, curiosity, and conformity. A variety of techniques are available to principals searching for successful ways to increase student motivation. The most significant contribution an administrator can make is to set the tone for a positive school climate. Several programs developed by schools can claim success with enhancing motivation. These programs use such techniques as open communication, pluralistic decision-making, small-group discussions, positive feedback, reality therapy, transactional analysis, and individualized curricula. (Author/JM)

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A Newsletter for the On-Line Administrator

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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STUDENT MOTIVATION:

An Intricate Puzzle

Student apathy and lack of motivation are the most serious constraints facing the secondary school principal today, according to a recent poll of the NASSP membership.[1] Despite the improvement in adult/youth relationships generally during the past decade, concern about student attitudes continues to occupy the attention of educators.

Related to this concern is a growing understanding of the importance of self-concept to a positive student attitude. Today the development of a strong student self-concept is ranked second by principals among the many tasks of education, whereas in 1965 it was ranked seventh. (Acquisition of basic cognitive skills is given top priority in both polls.)

Positive student behavior evolves, in part, from a strong self-concept. The important linkage between self-esteem and motivation among students is gaining special attention in some secondary schools. Among the benefits to students and to their schools are improved student behavior, a better school climate, and in some instances higher academic achievement.

Pieces of the Puzzle

The mystery of motivation: What are its sources and sustainers? What are its elements? Various theories evolving over the last 25 years attempt to define motivation and its impact upon learning. Underlying each explanation is a theory of learning. If, for example,

1. David R. Byrne, Susan A. Hines, Lloyd E. McCleary, *The Senior High School Principalship*, Vol. I (Reston, Va.: NASSP, 1978).

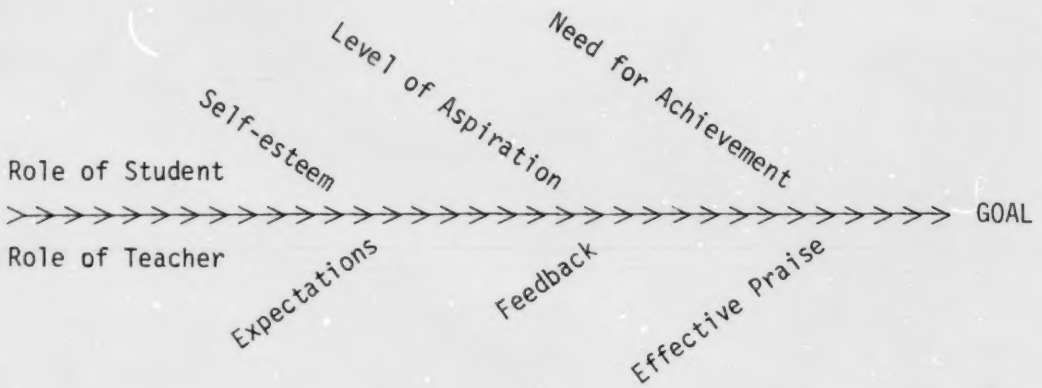
EA 011 561

one assumes that learning occurs only through the positive or negative reinforcement of specific behaviors, then reward tokens can be an acceptable method of increasing student motivation. On the other hand, if one accepts a Gestalt theory where learning occurs through perception of organized wholes rather than constituent parts, then enhancing student self-esteem becomes important to increased motivation.

Thus, motivation theories range from Skinner's "positive reinforcement" to Maslow's five-part "self-actualization" process. To date no single theory has gained universal acceptance among educators. For the school administrator, therefore, a synthesis of several approaches would be most practical, approaches selected according to the contingencies of the situation at hand.

Clues to Understanding

While conclusive evidence is scant on the cause and effect factors of student motivation, some agreement does exist about related factors. In a recent review of motivation literature, Wlodkowski concluded that among the factors significantly related to increased motivation are the following:[2]



Student Self-esteem: Consideration for student self-esteem appears to enhance motivation. It is one of the frequent components found in the on-line programs described below. On the other hand, low self-esteem leading to poor performance has been found by Coopersmith, Alper, Caplin, Coleman, and others.

Student Level of Aspiration: Level of aspiration relates to a student's expectation for future performance based upon success experiences in the past. Aspiration levels can be raised by structuring activities so that more successes than failures are experienced by students.

2. Raymond J. Wlodkowski, *Motivation* (Washington, D.C.: NEA, 1977).

Student Need for Achievement: Research in the field of achievement motivation has yielded some significant results. Achievement motivation may be defined as the "striving to increase or keep as high as possible one's capability in all activities in which a standard of excellence applies, and where the executive of such activities can, therefore, either succeed or fail."[3]

Students high in achievement motivation have the following characteristics:

- Interest in excellence for its own sake
- Preference for situations in which they take personal responsibility
- Setting of goals after considering a variety of alternatives.

Another facet of achievement motivation involves the concept, "locus of control." Richard de Charms has increased motivation in disaffected youth by providing training for teachers who in turn used the motivation exercises in their classrooms to train students.

By defining motivation as external or internal, de Charms describes those who are motivated by external forces as *Pawns*, while those who are motivated internally as *Origins*. He followed an experimental and control group of fifth graders through eighth grade and found dramatic differences between the two groups—one trained in motivation, the other untrained.

The group which had undergone training exhibited these characteristics:

- Higher academic achievement
- Higher attendance and punctuality
- Higher rating of classrooms as more encouraging of *Origin* (internally motivated) behavior
- Higher increases in an *Origin* measure.

He concludes that "motivation training can have a positive effect on the school behavior of inner-city children."[4] de Charms cautions that neither force nor complete freedom will increase motivation. The basic principle is "choice." The ability to make choices was carefully nurtured concurrently with increased responsibility for the student.

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3. Heinz Heckhausen, quoted in *Achievement Motivation*, ed. Marian Chapman and Russell Hill (Philadelphia, Pa.: Research for Better Schools, Inc., 1971) p. 1.1.
4. Richard de Charms, "Pawn or Origin? Enhancing Motivation in Disaffected Youth," *Educational Leadership*, March 1977, pp. 444-448.

Teacher Expectations, Feedback, and Praise: High teacher expectations and positive feedback, combined with appropriate use of praise (which is not indiscriminately given) and criticism in the classroom are also related to increased student motivation.[5]

Low teacher expectations lead to decreased motivation in students. False assumptions may be responsible in some instances. Such assumptions became apparent to John Silber, for example, when he observed a class watching a film on fish sounds. The teacher was playing rock music along with the film "to hold the student interest." Dr. Silber commented:

> The assumptions were clear. So was the condescension toward children. Without distracting gimmicks, no eighth or ninth grade child could be interested in the possibility that fish use sounds in order to communicate. No normal children would want to watch the fascinating movements of the fish, or hear their entrancing sounds. It was assumed, in short, that the young have no intellectual curiosity, no interest in organized and meaningful data; that instantaneous, nonmeaningful education is not merely acceptable, but ideal.[6]

Surprisingly, a factor which apparently bears little relationship to motivation is teacher personality. What teachers do—rather than their intrinsic personal characteristics—affects student motivation. Teachers in high motivation classes examined by Kounin, for example, did the following:[7]

- Explained the subject well
- Used positive approaches in teaching the subject
- Made appropriate task demands.

de Charms reports significant relationships between teacher belief systems and the academic achievement of their students. He concludes that the open and nondogmatic teachers provided an atmosphere in which more pupils could influence activities. Thus, they felt responsible and attained higher achievement scores.[8]

Technology and Motivation

Exploration of the relationship between motivation and school technological factors, such as the use of television in the classroom and computer-assisted instruction, has yielded inconclusive results to date. Some evidence exists that machines act negatively upon student motivation when compared with human teachers.

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5. Wlodkowski, op. cit., pp. 16-19.
6. Dr. John Silber, as quoted in paper to administrative and supervisory personnel. Baltimore County Public School System, Baltimore, Md., Oct. 5, 1978, p. 2.
7. Wlodkowski, op. cit., p. 23.
8. de Charms, p. 447.

Individualized Approaches to Finding Solutions

Recognizing the complexity of the student apathy problem, few teachers or administrators are wedded to narrow approaches for its solution. One clearly emergent trend is analysis of individual student motivational "style" or "profile." Frymier, for example, believes that the amount of structure in a classroom should vary with degree of student motivation.

Amount of structure (i.e., activities and relationships which develop in a class) is determined by the teacher. Less structure is called for when there is low motivation, according to Frymier. Teachers should analyze each student's learning needs and determine what amount of structure is most appropriate. (Low structure does not mean permissiveness. Rather, it reflects the creation of an environment in which students have significant choices.)

The Individually Guided Motivation Program developed by Klausmeier at the University of Wisconsin also reflects this trend toward adapting structure to pupil motivational needs.[9] Contemporary research and work in analysis of student learning styles (e.g., Rita and Kenneth Dunn) is another technique being used in individualized assessment.

A recent development which should further contribute to this trend is *The Motivation Profile,* based on research by Lian Hwang Chiu in 1966 and developed by him, Ball, and others at Educational Testing Service. Five independent factors were found as components of motivation:

1. Positive orientation toward school learning (which involved persistence, high level of aspiration, positive self-concept, and positive feelings about past performance at school).

2. Need for social recognition (seeking positive reinforcement from the teacher, competing academically with classmates in order to be seen by them as doing well in school).

3. Motive to avoid failure (fearing failure, high test anxiety).

4. Curiosity.

5. Conformity (working because it is "demanded by the teacher or by parents, or if relevant, by peer pressures").[10]

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9. For information on the I.B.M.P., contact Dr. Herbert J. Klausmeier, Wisconsin Research and Development Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. 53706.

10. *The Motivation Profile* is in the final stages of development. For information, write to Dr. Lian Hwang Chiu, Division of Education, Indiana University at Kokomo, 2300 S. Washington St., Kokomo, Ind. 46901.

With an instrument which measures 140 true-false items based on five factors, a graphic profile can be drawn to indicate the student's motivational style. The profile has been used to determine motivational styles of students and to determine teacher ideals of a "well-motivated student." While finding discrepancies between student styles and teacher perceptions of the ideal well-motivated student, Ball suggests that "perhaps it would be worth considering having students, teachers, and administrators look at student motivation profiles and teacher ideal student motivation profiles for purposes of grouping, obtaining insights, and for guidance and counseling activities."[11]

The Principal: Chief Puzzle Solver

Thus, a variety of techniques are available to principals searching for successful solutions to this intricate puzzle—student motivation. While some interventions have been focused on changing individual teacher and student attitudes and behavior by use of various therapeutic models, such as reality therapy, other methods have dealt with making structural changes (e.g., introduction of interdisciplinary team teaching, modular scheduling, or the addition of more alternatives to the curriculum).

Sometimes a packaged multi-media kit is utilized. Schools in more than 40 states (Grades K-college level) have adopted a course called the "I Can Course," derived from Zig Ziglar's book, *See You At the Top*. Strongly endorsed by Mamie McCullough, principal of Central High School in Thomasville, Georgia, the course has resulted in dramatic improvement in student attitude and social adjustment at both home and school. Lowered drug and alcohol usage and reduction in violence and vandalism have also been reported by those schools using the course. Regardless of geographical location, ethnic background, or inherent ability, results across the board have been positive.[12]

Yet, while the administrator's role in helping to select methods for increasing motivation is important, his most significant function is to set the tone for a total positive school climate in which motivation of both teachers and students is enhanced. He may do this by:

- holding high expectations for his school,
- giving positive feedback and effective praise to his staff,
- increasing staff self-esteem by involving them in decision making,
- providing opportunities for them to have success experiences.*

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11. Samuel Ball, ed., *Motivation in Education* (New York: Academic Press, 1977) p. 191.
12. The course includes books, cassettes, a creative ideas manual, and a teacher's guide. For more information call PLA for America (800) 527-0102.

* See the November 1978 *Practitioner*, "Providing Leadership for Teacher Motivation," for more suggestions concerning teacher motivation.

Several programs developed by schools below can claim success with enhancing student motivation. They represent the entire spectrum of the continuum of motivation theory. Most, however, may be characterized as eclectically, rather than narrowly, derived. They reflect the current state of the art.

To Illustrate

Voorhees High School
William E. Conwell, Principal

R.D.
Glen Gardner, N.J. 08826

Enrollment: 1,300

This new multi-unit high school combines an instructional strategy, organizational structure, and staff development process into a total plan designed to help schools meet student perceived needs, assessed educational needs, human development needs, and career requirements. Prior to its implementation, students described their high school as "lacking in humanity, cohesiveness, and congeniality." Failure rates and truancies were high.

The MUHS (multi-unit high school) process was implemented in two phases with assistance from the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (IDEA) of the Kettering Foundation. Phase one involved 20 percent of the staff in skills workshops that stressed open communications, cohesiveness, pluralistic decision making, and positive reinforcement. Teachers learned new strategies for classroom management and program management.

Phase two involved a four-part process:

1. An organizational model was developed that allowed the school to decentralize decision making to its most common teaching unit.

2. An adviser-advisee program was implemented to ensure that students' needs were met.

3. A systematic curriculum-instructional process was instituted.

4. A self-governance model was implemented to allow decisions to be made at the most appropriate levels.

Since implementation of the program, the school has received national recognition. Program goals have been achieved with significant increases in each of the following areas of concern: intellectual climate, student dignity, self-expression, cohesiveness, congeniality, and openness. The students have improved their academic and athletic records, as well.

Curtis Junior High School
Don L. Lindberg, Principal

8805 40th St., West
Tacoma, Wash. 98466

Enrollment: 1,000

A total school-wide program, including extracurricular activities, is the crux of increased motivation at Curtis Junior High School. "Pride is built into all forms of instruction," according to Principal Lindberg.

In 1975 most of the teaching staff attended a workshop on "Positive Image Building and the Educator," provided by the United Pacific Institute of Tacoma, Washington. The workshop dealt with building one's performance, self-esteem, self-concept, and self-image. Materials on school climate developed from the workshop were used to improve the school atmosphere. Two-way communication between teachers and students in homerooms allowed the resolution of many small but irksome problems.

The extracurricular program expanded to involve more girls, resulting in increased school spirit and a higher interest in class work. The use of teachers' Personal Growth Plans has allowed teachers to become involved in setting goals to accomplish professional objectives.

Lindberg concluded: "It is not an easy task to explain what motivates a student. We do feel strongly that staff working together on policy and programs is so important. We also feel staff knowledge of how to build student self-concept is equally as important."

New Rochelle High School
James R. Gaddy, Principal

265 Clove Rd.
New Rochelle, N.Y. 10801

Enrollment: 2,800

The central purpose of the Administrative Involvement with Disaffected Students (AIDS) Program at New Rochelle is to improve students' self-concept, provide them with additional access to desirable role models, and to show how to make school work for them, according to Principal Gaddy.

The principal, along with members of his administrative team, meets weekly with 15 students, grades 10, 11, and 12, who have been identified as "disaffected"; i.e., those who exhibit problems in behavior, absenteeism, tardiness, and who possess poor self-concepts.

Through the weekly sessions with the principal and members of the administrative staff, students are shown alternative ways of dealing with typical school situations. In addition, they are able to explore career opportunities and become better acquainted with programs and services offered by New Rochelle High School.

Results have been gratifying, with a reduction in suspensions for those students who now have begun to use the services of their school. Attendance for these students has also increased by about 60 percent and their class cutting has been practically eliminated. Gaddy claims that the AIDS program is proving to be far more successful than he and his staff anticipated.

St. Bede Academy — Peru, Ill. 61354
Father Henry Fritz, OSB, Principal

Enrollment: 393

At St. Bede Academy emphasis is placed on the development of an environment in which a student's self-concept may flourish. A Human Development Program initiated by former principal Jerome A. Wray* involves a four- to six-week workshop training in human relations skills and values clarification for selected juniors and seniors who then work with groups of eight freshmen and sophomore students twice a week in 25-minute periods for peer human relations training.

The Human Development Program, based on the belief that self-concept is built on feedback received from others, employs these guidelines:

- Teachers are asked not to use killer statements and sarcasm in the classroom.
- Students evaluate teachers, in part, on the teacher's demonstration of concern for the class.
- The program concentrates on developing awareness in students of their values and the values of others.

The administrative role is to keep parents, faculty, and students aware of the program and its available resources and to provide time and resources for program implementation. Now in its fourth year, the program has been extremely effective, according to Principal Fritz.

Carencro High School — Route 2, Box 55C2
Don Bourgeois, Principal — Lafayette, La. 70507

Enrollment: 1,400

By using concepts from William Glasser's reality therapy, students are asked to make a commitment to a behavioral change for a limited time. A responsible adult becomes involved with each student in the program so the student feels comfortable enough to establish a plan for behavior change and to accept responsibility for completing that change.

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* Jerome Wray is now principal of Regis School, 2100 Fenwick Ave., Eau Claire, Wis.

Two major concepts are stressed:

- The student is responsible for his own behavior—no one can make him do anything he does not want to do.
- The student must suffer the consequences of his behavior—since the consequences have been explained to him before he gets into trouble.

Among the benefits of the reality therapy model as applied by Carencro High School are the following:

- ✓ Teachers understand that sometimes they cause disruptive behavior by students.
- ✓ Student academic achievement increases because students begin to act in more responsible ways.
- ✓ Teachers have more time to teach because of fewer interruptions.
- ✓ The administrative staff has more time to supervise teachers since the need to discipline students is reduced.

Both transactional analysis training for teachers and reality therapy in conjunction with one-to-one conferences between teachers and students have proved to be very successful, states Principal Don Bourgeois. For example, suspensions have been reduced by 38.7 percent in one year of operation.

More than 90 percent of Carencro's teachers responded in a survey that the campus atmosphere had improved since the implementation of this program and 98 percent said they would like to continue with the self-discipline program.

One teacher's comments are worth noting:

> Before we began this program I had grown to literally hate my job because of the constant frustrations. The kids who misbehaved would just ruin my day and the kids who behaved as they should were just there. This program has forced me to take a good, hard look at myself. I didn't like what I saw. Now, however, I smile more and actually enjoy my job. The kids are nicer, we compliment each other, we care about each other. Some kids aren't really with the program yet, but we're working on it. I may just be able to last until retirement.

William Smith High School — 1255 Florence St.
Rolla R. Rissler, Principal — Aurora, Colo. 80010

Enrollment: 200

Sometimes an alternative school is the answer for increased self-esteem of the student. William Smith High School, formerly the Aurora Street Academy, was founded as an alternative approach to meet the varied learning styles of Aurora's students and to assist the student who could not adjust to the traditional classroom setting and was, thus, a potential dropout.

The school provides an individualized curriculum in which each student with close personal help from the teacher devises a learning contract that the pupil must fulfill in order to receive credit toward graduation. Contracts made for each subject are based on a point system established by the teacher.

Rationale for the learning contract is to create a success-oriented climate in which there are no provisions for failure. The student receives a grade for a completed contract only.

According to Bob Weimer, director of Counseling Services:

> . . . a significant improvement in students' feelings of self-worth, a decided and significant improvement in home relationships, and improvement in scholastic capabilities have all been realized.

Thompson Junior High School — 210 S. Fifth St.
Robert Roth, Principal — St. Charles, Ill. 60174

Enrollment: 800

Visitors to Thompson Junior High School often remark about the friendly student body, the positive student attitudes toward school and the sense of freedom with order which prevails there, according to Principal Robert Roth.

Roth attempted to evolve some efforts which he had used in creating a positive school climate and what follows is a summary list of some of his findings which might be helpful to other administrators.

- Have only those rules necessary to maintain a learning atmosphere and student safety.
- Determine rules in cooperation with staff and students.
- Treat teachers with respect and understanding. Listen carefully to teacher concerns.
- Set aside 20 minutes daily to informally tour the building and see what interesting classroom activities are in progress. Report your findings weekly in the Faculty Bulletin.

- Demonstrate trust to students by reducing the use of hall passes by developing policies with staff which, where practical, reserve the use of passes to students who have demonstrated they cannot be trusted.
- Give students visible and important responsibilities such as emptying money from vending machines and taking messages on the telephone.
- Provide opportunities in your school for students to find individual success—special classes for the gifted and learning opportunities for the handicapped, either through special resource teachers or regular classrooms.
- Based on personal and academic data on incoming students, place students with "compatible" teachers at the beginning of the school year. For example, place students who need structure with teachers who provide structure.
- Develop a guidance program which maximizes the counselor's contact with teachers, students, and parents and minimizes the counselor's responsibility for clerical details.
- Have a written parent/student handbook which identifies serious breaches of good conduct and the punitive discipline for such actions.

The reward for making efforts to develop positive student attitudes, commented Roth, is that the new class entering each fall begins to come to school with a positive image of the school program. Students who enter the school anticipating a positive school experience are in a good frame of mind to have one.

This *Practitioner* was developed by Nancy De Leonibus, research associate at NASSP. She appreciates the cooperation of schools responding to requests for information.

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